



Suffolk County Legislature

OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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Legislator Calarco Brings Action Against Big Pharma Pursues Drug Company Lawsuit for Pushing Prescription Opiates

Patchogue, NY – At the Tuesday, October 7 General Session Meeting of the Suffolk County Legislature, Majority Leader Rob Calarco laid a bill on the table that directs the County Attorney to evaluate the feasibility of pursuing legal actions against pharmaceutical companies who engage in aggressive marketing practices.

His bill, IR 1862-2014, “Directing the County Attorney to Determine the Feasibility of Suffolk County Bringing an Action Against Manufacturers of Prescription Opiates,” allows the County Attorney 60 days to commence a lawsuit, either individually or as part of a class with other municipalities which have already filed suit.

“In the past five years we have seen over-prescriptions of opioids go from isolated family issues to a full-blown community crisis,” said Legislator Calarco. “And this crisis is having a devastating effect on not only the health of our residents but is ravaging our health care budget.”

Recently the cities of Counties of Orange and Santa Clara in California, as well as the City of Chicago, began to pursue legal actions against pharmaceutical companies who engage in deceptive marketing, convincing doctors and the public that opiate drugs, previously used to treat a small number of severely ill patients, were appropriate for long and short-term pain

management and that the risks associated with using these addictive drugs were minimal compared to their benefits.

From 2007 to 2010, opiate pain reliever abuse rose 87% in New York State, with Suffolk County showing one of the greatest increases. This abuse has led to increased costs for County taxpayers associated with criminal behavior as well as medical care for addicts. In 2012, 8,271 emergency room visits in Suffolk County were attributed to opiate use. Of those, more than 50% of those who received treatment either had no insurance or were on a Medicaid plan, leading to millions of dollars in healthcare costs that are paid by Suffolk County taxpayers.

“Suffolk County residents are already paying for the emotional devastation caused by the pharmaceutical companies when they push their unnecessary drugs on our loved ones,” said Legislator Calarco. “We should not also be shouldering the burden of paying for the medical devastation these companies cause while they realize enormous profits. It’s time for them to bear some of these costs as well,” he said.

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